

**TOWN OF DARIEN - MINUTES
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
APRIL 15, 2009**

ATTENDANCE: Jane Branigan, Chairman; Vin Burke, Susan Daly, Marianne Gutierrez, Robert Marchesi, Charlie Goodyear, Susan Graham, Andy Hunter

STAFF: Sue Swiatek, Director; James Coghlan, Assistant Director

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Branigan called the regular meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

APPROVE MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF MARCH 18, 2009

The following corrections were made to the March 18, 2009 Minutes as follows:

Page 4, 3rd paragraph, 1st sentence as follows: Ms. Branigan clarified that they will be taking a vote in April on the Woodlands Park request. Ordinance regulations go through the RTM. Delete the balance of paragraph 3.

**** MS. BRANIGAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS CORRECTED.
** MOTION PASSED WITH TWO (2) ABSTENTIONS (MR. HUNTER,
MR. BURKE).**

**STATUS REPORT ON WEED BEACH MASTER PLAN
GUEST: DEBBIE PARNON, ACTING CHAIRMAN WBBC**

Ms. Parnon from the WBBC updated the Commission on the status.

She said that the engineering plans are holding up the project. Concerning the playground, Peter Wallace said he needs to have his work completed by Memorial Day – that is his deadline. The engineering plans are necessary for the sidewalk gravel, etc. The bathhouse is being moved up as there is a gap between the Playground and the old bathhouse. Fencing is important too.

Ms. Parnon said she will personally take the contract next week to Apappa John for signature. She then will take it to town hall.

**DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION ON REQUEST CHANGE TO THE REGULATION
FOR DOGS ON LEASH IN WOODLAND PARK**

Discussion took place on altering the regulation for dogs to be walked off leash at set hours. Certain dog owners continue to want that freedom within Woodland Park.

- ** MS. BRANIGAN MOVED THAT THE CURRENT REGULATION BE
MAINTAINED FOR DOGS ON LEASHES IN WOODLAND PARK NATURE
PRESERVE.**
- ** MR. BURKE SECONDED.**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Any dog that is not on a leash, will subject the dog's owner to a ticket. If the RTM passes an Ordinance it will apply to all parks. They are voting on an Ordinance on April 27.

DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION ON NEW REQUESTS FOR PARK USE

a. Movies in Tilley Park – Baywater Properties, David Genovese

Ms. Swiatek talked about the Darien Walk-In Movie Nights, Summer 2009. The location is at Tilley Park on Tuesday nights. The movie nights will begin in June through September for a total of four movie nights. The movies will run from about 7 p.m. until 9 p.m. There are some concerns that the center lawn is near neighbors homes. The projector lights and sound could be bothersome to the neighbors.

Overall, this will create fun for the residents as well as generating business for the local merchants. There will be portable toilets provided. The movies will be shown free of charge. Gofer Ice Cream may set up a stand in the park. The free movie nights will be advertised in the local newspapers. Electricity is sufficient in the park; and clean up afterwards will not be a problem. There will be water fountains. Parking at Koons lot is being arranged. The Darien Chamber of Commerce (sponsor) will take care of the Liability Insurance.

b. Firefighters Found. Fundraiser, Weed or Tilley – Susan Caruso

Lobster for Ladders event is being proposed for September 12, 2009 at Tilley or Weed Beach. It was discussed that there is a renovation project at Weed Beach. Weed Beach has a master plan in place for the bathhouse and paddle court area. Pear Tree will not be an option. Mrs. Graham pointed out that the date may conflict with another town event and should be looked into.

Last year was the first time doing this activity took place, and it was very successful. The event included a tent, bank, fire trucks, color guard and a lobster dinner. \$100,000 was raised and \$20,000 was distributed to each of the fire departments for special equipment and upgrades. Ms. Caruso is taking care of the Permit request.

c. ITP Triathlon, Weed Beach – Christopher Landino

Ms. Swiatek received correspondence from Christopher Landino, Executive Director of the ITP Foundation. This organization focuses on rare bleeding disorders in children and youth. In their attempt to raise awareness, they have requested the 5th annual triathlon to take place on Saturday, September 26. The status of Weed Beach renovation project is unknown. They will not be able to go to Pear Tree. There is a Darien Road Race being planned in September. Ms. Gutierrez suggested that the date be moved to September 13.

d. Nor. Yacht Club Regatta – Weed & Pear Tree – Jan Raymond

Pear Tree Point

It was discussed that there is a practice regatta on Saturday and Sunday, April 25-26 for 50 to 75 Optis. The Optis will be on trailers. Mr. Burke said that this is a great event. Mr. Burke said the port-a-potties will be available; and Ms. Swiatek added that there will be a dumpster too. This is a week long event. Coach boats will launch at Pear Tree and go to moorings in New York City. They will pull out on Sunday, May 3. Two trailers may need to stay at Pear Tree possibly until May 3. There is a need to set aside 20-25 parking spaces.

Weed Beach

100 parking spaces are needed. The dates are from April 29 to May 3. No cars can be left later than 10:00 p.m. as the beach is locked at night. There will be a gatekeeper at the Noroton Bay gates directing traffic.

e. USTA Youth Tennis, CL or WD courts – Wendy Flamand

This is an informal youth tennis program. There is no issue with the request Ms. Swiatek pointed out. There will be no lessons, just play. They plan to use, Mr. Coghlan reported, three of the four courts at Cherry Lawn.

Discussion followed. Ms. Branigan asked ‘what if’ they have use of the three courts and the kids don’t use them? Mr. Coghlan said that after one hour of a vacant, but booked court, it can be used by those who come to play. Mr. Coghlan said that a booked reservations schedule is posted. Weed Beach does not block time, he said.

The USTA brings kids together in teams to play singles, doubles and mixed doubles against other teams. It promotes social skills and important values such a cooperation and unity, and self growth. The kids range in age from 6-18.

Ms. Branigan said there are other courts in town. The town has ten courts, and the high school has five.

BUDGET REQUEST 2010 UPDATE

Ms. Swiatek said that the operating budget went through. They cut \$3500.00 from Weed Beach. She spoke about modifications that will need to be made for security. The use for

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security will be later than originally planned. No security services are warranted for early April. However, Ms. Swiatek said that with the building of a new \$250,000 playground there will certainly be more people.

Mr. Goodyear asked when the security will start at Weed Beach. Ms. Swiatek was not exactly sure of that date.

As far as capital budgets, the following passed:

- Resurfacing the tennis courts at Cherry Lawn Park went through.
- Paddle courts went through.
- The improvements to the Weed Beach paddle courts, which is a 5-year project, will begin in 2010.

REPORTS

Director's Report

Ms. Swiatek read her written report as presented.

Administration: Spring maintenance has started for all facilities. The ball fields are open for play; turf areas have been swept; fountains have been installed at Tilley; some water lines have been turned on, she reported.

The Darien Soccer Association donated a 'turf blanket' at the request of Supervisor of Parks Maintenance, Jim Flynn. This white nylon blanket has done a remarkable job in growing turf. Ms. Swiatek had a picture of the blanket down and then the after affects. In one month's time it changed the center of the field.

She reported that staff is at full capacity. Parking lots have been cleaned and the cleaning will be repeated later in the season.

She commented that they are encountering a rise in facilities rentals and that more people are using services that the town provides.

Mr. Burke asked if there will be fee increases. Mrs. Swiatek said no at this time.

Projects:

Weed Beach Master Plan Project. Plans have been finalized on the bathhouse and warming hut. Contract completion has been a challenge for the play area and sailing area.

The gymnasium bleachers and their resurfacing is in the works. Bids are out at this time. Ms. Swiatek reported that when they finalize the bid and the work begins, it should not be longer than two weeks from start to finish.

New lights for Tilley have arrived and are in storage.

Fencing work has been done at Cherry Lawn.

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Weed Paddle Court stair repairs between courts 4 and 5 will begin soon. The painting for the Weed Beach bathhouse fascia on the exterior also will begin soon, as weather permits.

Assistant Director's Report

Mr. Coghlan read from his written report as presented. He said that interviews for lifeguards were completed in late March. There will be a total of twenty lifeguards. A waterfront coordinator has been hired. Ms. Principe was previously a head lifeguard for the Department and will take on that position.

Mr. Coghlan reported that they are using a new beach security company, Securitas USA of Stamford, CT. Security will start at Pear Tree Point Beach on Friday, May 22. The date for Weed Beach is changing. This company is less expensive than the previously used company.

Bids are currently being reviewed for bathhouse cleaning services at Weed and Pear Tree Point beaches. The Cherry Lawn Park comfort station will be cleaned every day during the spring, summer and fall months and three days per week during the winter.

Mr. Coghlan noted that there will be website training at town hall in May. Each department maintains its own site and will take ownership of its content and accuracy.

He said that spring and summer soccer registration is going very well. So far there are 320 registrants.

Mr. Coghlan noted that the 2008-2009 paddle court season has ended. A detailed financial analysis has been prepared. There is a deficit this season. Ms. Graham pointed out that at certain times such as mid-day, there is no one there to collect fees. Mr. Goodyear asked what that fee is, and Mr. Coghlan said \$12.00. He said the expenses were up slightly. There was a big repair on court one for \$4,200.00. There were not as many lessons given.

Ms. Swiatek said that the guys did a very good job of maintaining the courts when there was a snowfall. There were over-time costs involved.

Chairman's Report

Ms. Branigan said that Weed Beach Master Plan contract needs to get signed so as not to delay the work for the start of the upcoming season.

Playground By The Sound

Ms. Daly talked about funding for two benches for the DTC (Democratic Town Committee). They are looking for dollars for two additional benches totaling four. Ms. Gutierrez asked the price of the benches. Ms. Daly said that two cost \$6,000.00. They would like adequate seating for parents.

The Brick Program is in the works. She said that the new walkway is to be continuous. Presently, the bricks on the walkway are where the existing building is and where the Cherry Lawn walkway ends.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Charlie Goodyear brought up the dog leash matter. He said that the Parks & Recreation department supports the dog park. While the vote was to keep dogs on a leash at all times in Woodland Park, it does not affect Cherry Lawn or others. The Ordinance before the RTM will affect all property. Parks and Recreation can write a regulation for Cherry Lawn. Ms. Branigan said that a dog park does not have to be at Dillards.

Ms. Swiatek said that there is an information meeting later in April on the Dillard Property. Mr. Burke asked where that is. Ms. Swiatek said at the high school. There are five acres.

She added that if trees are taken down, the trees must be put up somewhere else. If wetlands are destroyed they are to be improved elsewhere.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MS. GUTIERREZ MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
**** MS. GRAHAM SECONDED.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:23 p.m.

NEXT MEETING: Regular Meeting May 20, 2009 7:30 pm; Room 119 Darien Town Hall

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Hohlweck
Telesco Secretarial Services